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THOUGHTS
ON
THE KINGDOM
OF GOD.





Thoughts

ON THE

KINGDOM OF GOD.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM NIVEN, B.D.

INCUMBENT OF ST. SAVIOUR'S, CHELSEA.

"They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power."—*Ps.* cxlv. 11.

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PREFACE.

THE following pages contain the imperfect outline of a great subject.

Glorious, indeed, are the things which are spoken of the kingdom of God. References to it are everywhere to be found in the Holy Scriptures. It is the subject of prophecy and of promise—of parable, and of plain and direct instruction. So weak, however, is our faith, so dull are our spiritual perceptions, and so manifold are our infirmities, that, after all, it must be acknowledged that we see but "through a glass darkly."

Still, we see enough to strengthen our faith, to confirm our hope, and to guide our expectations in the right direction,

and we have the highest of all encouragement to pursue such studies.

When the Psalmist says, "Thy saints shall bless thee; they shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;" the words are evidently intended to express the Divine approval of those who do so.

The great Teacher has himself spoken much upon this subject, and clearly indicated his will that it should engage our thoughts and attention. He has left us many precious instructions respecting it, told us that it is given to his people to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, and promised the assistance of his Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. Nor can we forget that in that interesting period, in which he shewed himself alive after his passion, being seen of them forty days, "he spake to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

In humbly endeavouring to declare to his flock the whole counsel of God, the Author has ever sought to give a due place to the word of prophecy. He has taught that the second coming of our Lord in power and glory should at all times be considered as the grand object of hope and expectation to his people, and he has endeavoured to arrange and harmonize those numerous prophecies which reveal to us the things which shall accompany and succeed that great and blessed event.

In these expositions he has had a deep response from many persons, and a desire has been expressed to him for such a brief outline of "the things hoped for," as may prove a help to further study and investigation.

It is to meet such wishes that he now publishes this little volume, which he sends forth with many prayers that the blessing of Almighty God may accompany it.

If, through human infirmity, these pages contain any statements of an erroneous nature, he earnestly prays that his readers may be saved from adopting them; but if, as he humbly trusts, they are in harmony with the word of truth, he ventures to hope that they may tend to their edification and comfort.

On a subject of this kind, perfect unity of sentiment is not to be expected, but whatever may be the opinion of his readers on the views here advanced, the Author desires most truly and affectionately to say, "GRACE BE WITH ALL THEM THAT LOVE OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN SINCERITY."

St. Saviour's, Chelsea,
21*st March*, 1862.

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ON

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

CHAPTER I.

THE PROMISE OF A KINGDOM.

THERE is a kingdom which the God of heaven has already set up amongst men. It is spiritual and invisible. It is established in the hearts of his faithful people, and its distinctive characteristics are righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

To this kingdom our Lord referred when he said, "the kingdom of God

cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you."[1]

To be the subjects of this kingdom is of paramount importance, and until we are so, it is in vain to speculate on the things which pertain to the kingdom of glory.

It is on this account that we testify to all men the necessity of repentance towards God, and of faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and that as the ambassadors for Christ we beseech our fellow-sinners to be reconciled unto God, calling upon them to forsake the kingdom of darkness, that they may be translated into the kingdom of his dear Son.

Happy are they who have obeyed this calling! who have believed in the Lord

[1] Luke, xvii. 20, 21.

Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and have received the grace of the Holy Spirit in their hearts! They are the subjects of this spiritual and invisible kingdom, and although their views on other portions of divine truth may be imperfect and obscure, they are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, and "when Christ who is our life shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory."

To the kingdom of grace, then, we would ever give the first place in our thoughts, and urge it upon the consideration of all men as of primary importance, ever praying "that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so may grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by our Lord Jesus Christ."

It must be obvious, however, to every attentive reader of the Scriptures, that our Lord spoke not only of the kingdom of grace, but of a kingdom of glory, and that to those who had become the sub-

jects of the one he clearly and distinctly revealed the promise of the other.

Thus, we find him saying to his disciples, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;"[1] and again addressing the twelve, and saying unto them, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."[2] Here, then, is a kingdom which is yet to come, and which is made the subject of promise to those who were already partakers of the kingdom of grace. It is evidently in reference to the same great object of expectation that we are taught to pray, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth, as it is

[1] Luke, xii. 32. [2] Luke, xxii. 29.

in heaven;" and that our Lord has been pleased to promise that when he shall come again in the glory of his Father, with all the holy angels with him, he shall say to those upon his right hand, "Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Thus did our Saviour speak to his people of their future inheritance, and give them the clear and distinct promise of a glorious and everlasting kingdom.

Nor were his disciples unprepared for this. They were acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures, and with the numerous prophecies which they contain in reference to this subject. The pious Jews, like Joseph of Arimathea, "waited for the kingdom of God."

To such the promise of a kingdom was not new, and the instructions of our Lord must have come home to them with peculiar power, as he disclosed to

them the fatal mistake made by their nation in general, revealed to them the nature and the relative position of the kingdom of grace, and directed their faith and expectation to the kingdom of glory.

The inspired Apostles adopted precisely the same line of instruction. They, too, spake much of that spiritual and invisible kingdom of which they were the first ambassadors; but they spoke also, as their divine Master had done, of a glorious kingdom to be hereafter revealed. This formed the source of comfort and strength to their own minds, whilst they held it forth as the great object of expectation to others. In their great fight of afflictions, they were upheld by the assurance that they were "receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved," and in addressing words of consolation to their persecuted and afflicted followers, they reminded them

that "if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him," and that it is "through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God."

Thus they realised the promise of a kingdom, though still afar off, and "were persuaded of it and embraced it," and, like the saints of a former dispensation, they "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth;" nor shall they be disappointed of their hope, for yet a little while, and the long-promised kingdom shall come, and "the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."

Nor let it be supposed that the announcement of this kingdom is of too speculative a nature to produce any real practical results. The very reverse is the case. The Gospel itself is described by its divine Author, as the Gospel of the kingdom; and he would have the

kingdom to be fully and freely proclaimed in connexion with that great moral and spiritual change, which the Gospel is calculated to produce, and which alone can fit us to enter upon its enjoyment. Thus we find him saying to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God;"[1] and on another occasion, we are told that he took a little child, and set him in the midst of his disciples, and said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."[2]

If the unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God, then it is obvious that an inward and spiritual change is necessary to prepare us for it, and that the very announcement of the kingdom is calculated to produce an awakening

[1] John, iii. 3. [2] Matt. xviii. 2, 3.

effect upon the mind. To this our Lord referred, when he revealed to St. Paul his high purpose concerning him, and intimated that he was about to send him to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may obtain forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among all them that are sanctified through faith that is in me."[1]

The nature of this change is illustrated by many of the Scripture characters, as in Matthew the Publican, and Mary Magdalene, and the Philippian Jailor; and in others who were naturally more virtuous and upright, as in the guileless Nathanael, and the good Centurion, and the Ethiopian Treasurer. These differed widely from each other in natural temperament, and in the measure in which

[1] Acts, xxvi. 18.

they had wandered from the way of purity and righteousness; but all were fallen and sinful—all needed a change of nature to fit them for the kingdom of heaven, and all obtained it by faith in Christ Jesus, "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

Nor is it less instructive to observe this work as it is to be found in our own times, and to see how, under the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit, men experience the same great change, and become new creatures in Christ Jesus. This is strikingly exhibited in the lives of such men as Bunyan and Newton, with others of the same class, and perhaps still more impressively in the experience of those (far more to be envied) who had never gone so far astray, but were preserved in outward propriety of conduct, and entitled to the respect and

confidence of their fellow-men — as Wilberforce and Chalmers, Parry and Havelock: men whose moral feelings were pure and good, but who felt and acknowledged their sinfulness in the sight of an infinitely holy God — who sought and obtained pardon and peace through the blood of Christ, and, under the constraining influences of his Spirit, devoted their lives to his service and glory.

It is impossible to conceive a more important point of inquiry than that suggested by this subject, — Have we experienced this great change? Have we turned from all ungodliness and worldly lusts to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world? Has the love of God been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us?

These questions are of vast importance; for unless we are the subjects of this inward and spiritual change *now*, we

shall be found unprepared for that which awaits us *hereafter;* and in reference to which St. Paul speaks with so much solemnity when he says, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."[1]

If, then, we would be prepared for the high destiny of the sons of God, and inherit the kingdom promised to them that love him, we must seek it in his own appointed way—"through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." We must be numbered with those of whom we read, that "as many

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 50–52.

as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

We must be the subjects of the kingdom of grace, if we would secure an entrance to the kingdom of glory. To those who are already in this happy state of mind — to Christ's faithful soldiers and servants, who are manfully fighting under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil—how full of comfort and joy is the prospect of this future and glorious kingdom! Their night of weeping has been long and dark, but it cannot last much longer. A joyful morning is at hand—a morning without a cloud—a time when all sorrows shall be over, and all tears shall be wiped away. Then, indeed, as the dark clouds disperse before the opening beams of everlasting day,

they shall find that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us," and that they shall all be forgotten in that happy day, when "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

CHAPTER II.

THE LOCALITY OF THE PROMISED KINGDOM.

THAT there is a kingdom which the Lord has promised to them that love him will be generally admitted, but the *locality* of that kingdom is a subject on which difference of opinion will be found to exist, and may fairly be entertained. The inquiry is, nevertheless, interesting and important; and, when pursued in a right spirit, it cannot injure, but must tend to edify, those who are engaged in it.

The wise man has said, that "in all labour there is profit;" and this is especially true of the labour connected

with the patient investigation of any portion of the Word of God. Such labours tend to enlighten the understanding, whilst they sanctify the heart; and, in doing so, they have their own great reward.

In proceeding to inquire into the locality of the promised kingdom, it is right that we should bear in mind that many good men have affirmed that all the promises and statements respecting it may be understood as referring either to the advancement of the kingdom of grace, or to the admission of the righteous to the kingdom of glory in heaven. With every feeling of respect for the piety and learning of the writers in question, we do not feel satisfied with these interpretations, and we cannot refrain from asking, When, then, shall the meek "inherit the earth?"[1] Where

[1] Matt. v. 5.

are we to look for that "restitution of all things spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began?"[1] Where shall we behold "the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness?"[2]—and when shall the prayer be fully answered which our Lord has taught his people in all ages to offer, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven?"

From these and many like passages we are led to infer that the local scene of the promised kingdom is, in some way or other, connected with this earth, and that here the glory of the Lord shall one day be revealed. It is not, however, to isolated passages that we would refer in proof of this, but to the great chronological prophecies of Scripture—those wonderful revelations in which future events are presented to us

[1] Acts, iii. 21.

[2] 2 Pet. iii. 13.

in the most systematic form, and in several of which the history of the civilized world, during many thousand years, is distinctly portrayed.

We have only to examine these with an unprejudiced mind, and we shall see that the earth is clearly pointed out as the scene of future glory and blessedness, and that the words of the Psalmist shall have their literal fulfilment when he said, "Evil doers shall be cut off, but those that wait upon the Lord, *they shall inherit the earth.* For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek *shall inherit the earth*, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."[1]

Will the reader turn to his Bible and calmly and dispassionately study the following passages from the great chrono-

[1] Ps. xxxvii. 9–11.

logical prophecies, and ask whether or not they point to this earth as the future local scene of the kingdom of God?—

1. In the second chapter of the book of Daniel we have the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. The vision had passed from the mind of the king, and in recalling it to his memory the Prophet says, "Thou, O King, sawest, and behold a great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass. His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the

summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: *and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.*"

On interpreting this vision of the king, the Prophet informs him that his own kingdom was indicated by the head of gold, and that the several parts of the image which he had seen were intended to represent kingdoms which were subsequently to arise.

Here the statement of the Prophet is in the strictest harmony with the great facts recorded in history. The Assyrian Empire, over which Nebuchadnezzar reigned, was followed in succession by the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman Empires. On this part of the subject, however, it is not our purpose to dwell. The reader is referred to the numerous expositions of learned men, where *the view* thus briefly stated will be found

to be proved and illustrated to the satisfaction of all reasonable minds.[1]

The last of the four great monarchies or kingdoms is undoubtedly the Roman, and the ten toes clearly refer to the ten kingdoms which were to arise from that empire, and which are so frequently symbolized in the prophecies both of the Old and New Testament. Now the Prophet says, "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet . . . . and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, *and filled the whole earth.*" And in farther explanation of this he adds, "In the days of these kings *shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and*

[1] See Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, 13 & 14 Dissertations; Elliott's *Horæ Apocalypticæ*, on cc. xiii. xvii.; Birks on Daniel, ch. vii.; Keith's *Destiny of the Church and World*, vol. i.; Cumming on Daniel, cc. v. vi. vii.

the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."

Here, then, it is distinctly affirmed that the last or Roman Empire, with the ten kingdoms which were to arise out of it, is to be succeeded by a kingdom which shall be suddenly established *in the earth*, not by human instrumentality, *but by an immediate exercise of Divine power*, and which shall break in pieces and consume all preceding kingdoms, *and shall stand for ever.*

The application of this prophecy to the first establishment of Christianity is wholly inadmissible. The ten kingdoms represented by the ten toes of the image, did not arise till 450 years after the birth of Christ,[1] neither is there the slightest

[1] On the rise of the ten kingdoms see Elliott's *Horæ Apocalypticæ*, vol. ii. part 4, ch. iv.

resemblance between the first advent of the Prince of Peace and the event here foretold, by which all the kingdoms of the earth are to be broken to pieces, and become as chaff before the summer threshing-floors, which the wind carries away.

2. In the seventh chapter of the same book we have another prophecy of great importance. It is usually designated Daniel's vision of the four great empires.

Under the symbolical representation of four great beasts, which were seen to arise from the sea, the Prophet describes the universal empires (already delineated in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar) which were to arise in the earth—the Assyrian, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. Of the last he gives a very minute description. He foretels the rise of ten kingdoms in connexion with it, and of another power diverse from the

others, which was to utter blasphemies against Almighty God, and to inflict great injuries upon his saints.

But, whilst all this is going on — whilst these ten kingdoms are existing, and whilst this blasphemous and persecuting power continues its unhallowed work, the scene experiences a sudden change — the Prophet says, "I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. *And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*"

Here, then, is the same great fact revealed to us which had been already announced in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The last or Roman Empire, in its decem-regal

form, in connexion with a power diverse from the others, and distinguished by its blasphemous assumptions, and persecutions of the saints of God, is to continue until the Lord himself shall appear in the clouds of heaven, and then shall it be succeeded by no mere temporal kingdom, but "*the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.*"

3. In the fourteenth chapter of the book of Zechariah we have the same truth presented to us, although it is seen by the Prophet from a different point of view. His vision is concerning the great day of the Lord. He foresees the ancient people of God restored to the land which the Lord God gave unto their fathers, and the opposition of man to the divine

purpose is manifested by the gathering together of all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and "then (ver. 3) shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle," and (ver. 5), "the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." And what shall follow this glorious advent of the Lord with his saints? He clearly intimates that it shall be succeeded by the establishment of his kingdom in the earth. He adds (ver. 9), "*the Lord shall be King over all the earth; there shall be one Lord, and his name one.*"

Thus strictly do the visions of Daniel and the prophecy of Zechariah harmonize with each other. Each foretels the continuance of the present state of things until the Lord shall suddenly appear in glory, and each intimates that his advent shall be followed *by the establishment of his kingdom in the earth.*

4. The canon of Scripture closes with

the Apocalypse, that truly wonderful communication which "God gave unto Jesus Christ, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass." This revelation was made to St. John when the Roman Empire was in the zenith of its might, and it was evidently designed to make known to the Church the leading events which were to occur between the time when the Apostle received it and the consummation of all things. Here, according to the view of the most learned and successful expositors,[1] we have the decline and fall of the Western Roman Empire, — the rise of the ten Gothic kingdoms, — the development of the predicted Antichrist in the Papacy, — his continuance during a period extending to 1260 years, — and the glorious Reformation. Here also we have the fall of the Eastern Empire, — the rise and

[1] See Elliott's *Horæ Apocalypticæ;* Barnes on Revelation; Cumming's *Apocalyptic* Sketches.

heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Such are the statements of the great chronological prophecies of the Holy Scriptures, and a careful and unprejudiced study of them brings us to this conclusion, that the earth which we now inhabit — this burdened, groaning earth — is destined to be the local scene of the kingdom of God, and that it is *here*, where our blessed Saviour suffered and died for our sins, that he shall also be revealed in glory.

Reject this view, and the prophecies referred to, with many others, are obscure and unintelligible. Admit this, and all is harmony and beauty. We can understand at once how it is that the meek shall inherit the earth, how there shall, indeed, be a restitution of all things, and why it is that the souls of departed saints in heaven are represented as anticipating that happy period,

and singing a new song, saying, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and *we shall reign on the earth.*"[1] Lord, hasten that happy day! Let thy kingdom come, and *thy will be done in earth*, as it is in heaven!

"Come, then, and added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy! It was thine
By ancient covenant, ere nature's birth;
And thou hast made it thine by purchase since,
And overpaid its value by thy blood."

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[1] Rev. v. 9, 10.

CHAPTER III.

THE EVENTS WHICH SHALL USHER IN THE KINGDOM.

If the view expressed in the former chapter be correct, and if the earth is destined to be the local scene of the promised kingdom of God, it is both interesting and important to ascertain the nature of the events by which the kingdom shall be ushered in. These, however, must be distinguished from the events which shall precede them, — as the drying up of the mystical Euphrates, — the evil work of the three unclean spirits, — the tripartite division of the great city, and the predicted time of general political perplexity and social distress. These form a very important

subject in themselves, and are of too comprehensive a nature to be considered here.[1] Our present inquiry is directed exclusively to those events by which the kingdom shall be ushered in and established in the earth.

1. The first and most momentous of these will be THE PERSONAL APPEARING OF OUR LORD IN GLORY.

"Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so. Amen."[2] That this is the grand event which shall usher in the kingdom seems to be clearly revealed, and yet many good men have entertained an opposite opinion. They admit that there will be a time when righteousness and peace shall universally prevail

[1] For some observations on these events, see chap. vii.

[2] *Rev.* i. 7.

in the earth, but they place the second advent of our Lord at the close, and not at the opening of that period.

It is difficult to understand how this view can be seriously entertained, for the prophetical Scriptures seem uniformly to give the second and glorious advent of our Lord the same relative position. They place it immediately *after* a time of great trouble and distress, and immediately *before* the establishment of his kingdom in the earth.

This is very clearly set forth in the great chronological prophecies which have been already referred to, and in others to which the attention of the reader is invited.

Thus, in Daniel's vision of the four great Empires, it is obvious that he describes the appearing of our Lord as taking place whilst the ten kingdoms of the last or Roman Empire are still in existence, and whilst the unhallowed

work of the little horn (who is to make war with the saints, and to prevail against them, *until the Ancient of days shall come*) is still going on. It is whilst these things are taking place that he says, "*I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.*"[1]

Here, then, is the advent of our Lord suddenly taking place whilst his saints are still suffering from a blasphemous and persecuting power of long continuance. Nor is there any obscurity in the description of what follows. It is clearly the establishment of Christ's kingdom upon earth; for the Prophet says, "There was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him." And

[1] Dan. vii. 13.

again (v. 27), "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

In the prophecy of Zechariah (chap. xiv.) we have precisely the same leading features described. The advent of the Lord is represented as taking place at the very moment when all nations are gathered together against Jerusalem to battle. Then, the Prophet says, "*The Lord shall go forth and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east. . . . . And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.*"

Here is the advent of the Lord taking place whilst the world is the scene of

war and discord, and it is followed by the announcement of the same event described by the prophet Daniel; for Zechariah adds, "The Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one."

Again, in the very comprehensible and remarkable prophecy, which was delivered by our Saviour on the Mount of Olives,[1] referring to the period which shall immediately precede his advent, he says, "On earth shall be distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken;" and he adds, "*Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*"

[1] Matt. xxiv. See Dallas on *Prophecy on the Mount of Olives.*

Thus is his second and glorious appearing described by our Lord himself, as occurring under the very circumstances foretold by Daniel and Zechariah, not in times of prevailing righteousness and peace, but in times of great perplexity and distress. In reference, moreover, to what shall follow that great event, he directs us to precisely the same object of expectation (viz. the establishment of his kingdom), for, having spoken the very significant parable of the fig-tree, he says, "When ye see these things come to pass, know ye *that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.*"

In the Apocalypse we find that the glorious appearing of our Lord is placed at the same point. It is immediately succeeding the fall of the mystical Babylon, when the Beast and the Kings of the earth combine to make their last grand effort to defeat the purpose of the Most High. It is at that moment that

the heaven is opened, and our Lord appears in glory, having his head adorned "with many crowns," and having "on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS."[1] This event is followed (as it is in all the other visions) by the establishment of his glorious and everlasting kingdom *on the earth.*

From these, and many other passages of Scripture which harmonise with them, we cannot doubt that the promised kingdom will be ushered in by the personal appearing of our Lord in glory,[2] and that at the very time "when

[1] Rev. xix. 11–16.

[2] It is interesting to observe how many good men of our own time, who have been opposed to the doctrine of the pre-millennial advent of our Lord, have either been convinced of its truth, or have unconsciously approached so nearly to it as practically to admit it.

The late Dr. Chalmers was believed to be opposed *to this* doctrine, but in the posthumous works of

the nations are angry," and when "scoffers, walking after their own lusts, shall say, Where is the promise of his coming?" that then he shall suddenly appear in the glory of his Father, with all the holy angels with him.

II. There is another event revealed to us as inseparably connected with the coming of our Lord, and the establish-

that great and good man we find the following striking observations on the 50th Psalm:—

"This is a remarkable psalm, and the subject of it seems to lie within the domain of unfulfilled prophecy. There has been no appearance as yet from Mount Zion at all corresponding with that made from Mount Sinai, and I am far more inclined to the literal interpretation of this psalm than to that which would restrict it to the mere preaching of the Gospel in the days of the Apostles. It looks far more like the descent of the Son of man upon the Mount of Olives, with all the accompaniments of a Jewish conversion, and a first resurrection, and a destruction of the assembled hosts of Antichrist. The saints here summoned are those within the pale of the everlasting covenant, ratified by the blood of the sacrifice of Christ. The address here given is *like that from* the Son of God, now manifested to

ment of his kingdom. It is THE GATHERING TOGETHER OF HIS SAINTS, that they may be glorified with him. On this subject we have his own gracious and authoritative words, that at his coming "he shall send his angels, with a great sound of a trumpet, *and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other.*"[1]

the Jews, who had returned, though yet unconverted, to the Holy Land, but who now, hearing the words as well as seeing the person of Him whom they had pierced, are born in a day by the impressive remonstrance and overpowering spectacle."—Chalmers' *Posthumous Works*, vol. iii. p. 51.

The late Rev. Charles Simeon, whose praise is in all the churches, was also opposed to the doctrine of the pre-millennial advent, but in a letter addressed to Miss E. Elliot he makes the following remarkable admission:—"I think it highly probable that there will be some *personal* manifestations of the Saviour—perhaps many, and perhaps like that on Tabor, or more glorious still."—Simeon's *Memoir* by the Rev. W. Carus.

[1] Matt. xxiv. 31.

This event was foretold in very early times. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of this, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh *with ten thousand of his saints.*" David clearly foresees the same event. In the 50th Psalm he thus announces the second advent,—"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him;" and, as if describing the first grand transaction of that day, he adds (v. 5), "*Gather my saints together unto me*, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

St. Paul very frequently speaks of this event, and always in the closest connexion with the second coming of our Lord. Thus he assures us, that "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, *we also shall appear with him in glory;*" and when he had occasion to correct certain errors into which the Thessalo-

nians had fallen, in reference to the expectation of our Lord's immediate appearing, the argument by which he enforces his exhortation is this,—"We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by *our gathering together unto him.*"

The description which he gives of this event in his first epistle to the same Church is truly sublime. He says that "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."[1]

At whatever period, then, the advent of our Lord shall take place, it shall un-

[1] 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.

doubtedly be accompanied by the gathering together of his saints—by the glorification of all who have ever loved and served him on the earth, whether they shall be alive and remain, or whether they have long since departed in the faith of his holy name."

Then it is that "he comes to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe;" for in that day "he will swallow up death in victory." The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and the living shall be changed.

Oh, happy prospect! Oh, glorious consummation! As we anticipate it we may, indeed, adopt the language of the Apostle, and exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

This gathering together of the saints

appears to be the same event as that described in the Apocalypse as the marriage of the Lamb. It is the perfected union between Christ and his Church; the admission of his people to the participation of his glory; their entrance upon the joy of their Lord. Nor are we left in doubt as to the time when this union shall be consummated. It is on the fall of the mystical Babylon, and as her smoke rises up for ever and ever, that there is "heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."[1]

It was as St. John gazed on that

[1] Rev. xix. 6, 7.

glorious scene that he was specially told to write, saying, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

Reader! may that blessedness be yours! May you be found arrayed in that fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints; and so have "an entrance ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!"

Such, then, are the *heavenly* events by which the long-promised kingdom shall be ushered in. The Lord himself shall appear in glory. He shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, into the air or firmament of this planet, and there shall he receive his people to himself, transform them into his own glorious image, and wipe away all tears from their eyes.

There are, however, *earthly* as well

as heavenly events, which shall usher in the kingdom, and which are represented as taking place at this momentous period.

1. There will be THE RESTORATION AND CONVERSION OF THE JEWS.

This is ever connected with the coming and kingdom of our Lord,—the restoration of Israel to the land which the Lord God gave unto their fathers; the rebuilding of Jerusalem; the pouring out of the Spirit of grace and supplications upon them; and their complete conversion unto Christ.

Isaiah foretels this, in the eleventh chapter of his prophecy, where, having announced the establishment of the millennial kingdom, and described the happiness of the various tribes of animated nature, he says (vv. 11, 12), "It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second *time* to recover the remnant of his

people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."

But, which of the prophets has not spoken of these days? Which has not foretold a time when a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment: in whose days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely? Moses spake of this ere they had reached the land of Canaan. Having set before them the fearful consequences of disobedience, and foretold their dispersion amongst all nations, he anticipates a happier day—the day of their repentance and return to the law of the

Lord; and he says, "Then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the utmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: and the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers."[1]

But a greater than Moses or the Prophets has spoken of these days. The Lord Jesus has said that "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled;"[2] but at his coming the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, and

[1] Deut. xxx. 3–5. [2] Luke, xxi. 24.

then shall Jerusalem be no more trodden down. The time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come; and "when the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory."

St. Paul tells us that he would not have us to be ignorant of this mystery, "that blindness in part is happened unto Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."[1] That Deliverer shall come, and his people shall be willing in the day of his power. He shall establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

2. Another event, very different in its nature from that now described, is clearly revealed as taking place at this

[1] Rom. xi. 25, 26.

time, in immediate connexion with the coming of our Lord, and the restoration of Israel. IT IS THE DESTRUCTION OF ANTICHRIST AND OF ALL THOSE POWERS WHICH HAVE TAKEN COUNSEL AGAINST THE LORD, AND AGAINST HIS ANOINTED.

That certain powers have been mysteriously permitted to hinder the progress of true religion in the world will not be denied; and that prophecy had intimated that it should be so, and that these powers should continue for a very lengthened period, will also be generally admitted. The time of their destruction is not less clearly revealed. It is at the approaching of our Lord.

Thus, when the prophet Daniel foresaw the rise of that "little horn," which had eyes and a mouth that spake great things, he says, "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them, *until the Ancient of*

days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom."[1]

This language needs no explanation; it clearly informs us that the time appointed for the destruction of that blasphemous and persecuting power is at the appearing and kingdom of our Lord.

Let the reader compare this with the statement made by St. Paul, in his prophecy of the man of sin (2 Thess. ii. 3–9).

He is preparing them for the revelation of that "wicked one," and he informs them that it was at present hindered by the existence of a power well known to themselves (supposed to be the Roman Imperial Power), and on the removal of which the man of sin would

[1] Dan. vii. 21, 22.

be revealed. He says, "And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way, and then shall that Wicked be revealed, *whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.*"

With statements so definite and distinct as these, it will, we presume, be admitted, that whatever "the little horn" of Daniel, or "the man of sin" of St. Paul, may be, the time appointed for their destruction is at the appearing of our Lord.

Many other passages of Scripture testify the same thing, and refer to this period as the great day of the Lord, in which the enemies of Christ and the oppressors of his people shall be finally destroyed; the day "when the Lord

Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."[1] It seems, moreover, to be indicated that Palestine is the local scene where this last great overthrow and destruction will take place, and the occasion of their assembling there appears to arise from the hostility of the nations to the restoration of Israel, and to their establishment in the land.

But the purpose of the Lord shall stand; "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them

[1] 2 Thess. i. 7–10.

in derision." He has said, "Behold, I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle;" and again, "In that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it."[1]

The elements by which this final act of opposition to the Divine purpose shall be brought to pass are already at work in the earth. In the sixteenth chapter of the Apocalypse we read, that during the time when the sixth vial is poured out on the river Euphrates, three unclean spirits "go forth to the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them together to the battle of the great day of God Almighty."

We are not without many convincing proofs that this evil work is rapidly pro-

[1] Zech. xii. 3.

ceeding. Our own times are remarkable for the revival of popery, rationalism, and false teaching of every kind,—religious, political, and social. The issue will be the great conflict so long foretold; and the end—the destruction of every power which has opposed the kingdom of God. "Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth; serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

Such appear to be the great predicted events by which the kingdom of God shall be ushered in:—The appearing of our Lord in glory, with the gathering together of his saints; the establishment of his throne in the heavens, whilst, faithful to his promise, he restores the kingdom to Israel—destroys the anti-

christian powers—pours out his Spirit upon all flesh, and "delivers the creature itself from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Then shall the whole earth be filled with his glory, and that truly millennial Psalm shall have its complete fulfilment, which says,—

"O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory.

"The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen.

"He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and *rejoice,* and sing praise.

"Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.

"With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King.

"Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

"Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together

"Before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity." (Ps. xcviii.)

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM.

In the preceding chapter we have seen that the kingdom of God will be ushered in by the personal appearing of our Lord in glory, and by the gathering together of his saints. We have also seen, that whilst these great events are occurring in the air or heavens of this planet, there are other events which are revealed as taking place on the surface of the earth; as the restoration and conversion of Israel, and the destruction of Antichrist with his assembled hosts.

And now, "the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the

isles be glad thereof." But what shall be the nature of his reign? What shall be the constitution of that kingdom of which we read that "it shall never be moved?"[1]

Such inquiries are peculiarly sacred, and in entering upon them we may indeed put our shoes from off our feet, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground. May it please Almighty God to preserve us from all presumptuous speculations, and to bestow upon us the grace of his Holy Spirit to save us from error, and to guide us into all truth!

By those who are wholly opposed to such studies we are sometimes reminded, in the words of Scripture, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." True; but they forget that the inspired writer has added, "but

[1] For the views of the early Fathers on the Millennial Kingdom see Appendix A.

God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

It is what God has so revealed that we desire to know, and by meditation and prayer to derive from them that measure of light and knowledge which they are intended to convey.

What, then, has it pleased Almighty God to reveal to us in the Scriptures of truth respecting the constitution of his millennial kingdom?

We have already seen, that at the Advent of our Lord certain of the events which shall occur are *heavenly*, and that others may be described as *earthly*, taking place on the surface of the earth. It is important to bear this in mind, for the same distinction is applicable to the events which shall follow the Advent, and if duly attended to, this will be found to harmonise some of those apparent contradictions which have proved an insuperable difficulty to many minds.

The millennial kingdom will be partly *heavenly* and partly *earthly*. "Heaven and earth will be united under the happy period of Messiah's reign. The kingdom of heaven will comprise both heaven and earth. They will then "be gathered together in one," even "in Christ." He will restore a direct and constant intercourse between the two. The Sovereign and his bride, with all the just men made perfect of the ages previous to the Advent, will occupy the heavenly sphere or department of the kingdom; and they thence shall reign over the nations of the earth. For it is his purpose, "that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him."[1]

I. THE CONSTITUTION OF THE KINGDOM, THEN, WILL BE PARTLY HEAVENLY.—

[1] Eph. i. 10.

"The Lord hath prepared his throne *in the heavens*, and his kingdom ruleth over all." It is *there* that he will specially manifest himself as the King of Glory. It is there that his saints will meet him, and there, apparently, that the Holy City, new Jerusalem, shall be revealed, and shall continue to be throughout the millennial dispensation. How little do we know of the Divine purpose in the heavens or firmament of this planet, or of what may even now be going on there! Our great adversary is described as "the prince of *the power of the air*, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;" and from this we may infer that the air is the chief seat of his influence and power.[1] It shall not long continue to be so. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, Satan and

[1] See Barnes' *Notes on* Ephesians, ii. 2.

his hosts shall be for ever cast out, and the heavens shall receive that grand purification which shall fit them for the presence of their Lord and King.

In the heavens will the Lord, then, establish his throne, and around him will be his saints in their resurrection bodies, now presented to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Such appears to be the scene described by St. John in the twentieth chapter of the Apocalypse, and which here presents as immediately following the marriage of the Lamb. He says:—"I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ

a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."[1]

Here, then, is the manifestation of the sons of God. Christ, who is their life, has appeared; and, faithful to his pro-

[1] Rev. xx. 4–6.

A difficulty has occurred to many minds in connexion with this passage. Admitting that it refers to the first resurrection at our Lord's pre-millennial advent, it seems to them to exclude from this high distinction all save Martyrs and Confessors. An attentive examination of the context will probably remove this difficulty. The Apostle says, "I saw thrones, and *they* sat upon them;" but why is the relative pronoun here used? Who are the parties described as "they?" They are evidently the glorious company spoken of in the former *chapter*, and who are first described as called to

mise, they also appear with him in glory. Here is the full disclosure of the high purpose for which they are called. They are made unto our God kings and priests. *Kings*, to take part in the righteous government of the nations; and *priests*, to offer unto God continually the holy and perfect sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise.

Here, moreover, is the fulfilment of all that departed saints are represented

the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and then as following their Lord at his appearing and kingdom. The eye of the Apostle still rests upon them, and as he contemplates their glory and happiness he says, "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them;" that is, the whole company of the redeemed; and then, as if to point out a pre-eminence in honour and blessedness, he adds, "And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God."

There is no exclusion here. All who have ever loved and served their Lord are now remembered by him; but "as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead."

as now anticipating, when they sing their new song, saying, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on [or over] the earth."[1]

It seems probable that this state of the resurrection church was symbolized of old time by the cherubim of glory. From the earliest times that remarkable symbol is presented to our view, in connexion with the Lord and his immediate presence. An eminent writer says, "the Cherubim are not angelic, but human symbols, in some way associated with the Church; especially when viewed as redeemed; and they are significant of its glorious power and beauty, as presented before the throne of God and of the Lamb. The very same character may

[1] Rev. v. 9, 10.

be ascribed to the living creatures of Ezekiel's visions, and to the cherubim, wherever they are mentioned in the Old Testament. They typify and shadow the complete Church, gathered out of all times and nations, and from the four corners of the world, waiting in attendance on her Lord and Saviour, in his redeeming glory."[1]

If this view be correct, the vision seen by Ezekiel by the river Chebar[2] is strikingly illustrative of the *heavenly* portion of the millennial kingdom. He describes these glorious living ones appearing as "from a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself." Above them there was the likeness of a firmament; and "above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness

[1] Candlish on Genesis, vol. i. p. 126. [2] Ezek. i.

of the appearance of a man above upon it." The Prophet is informed that this was "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." Here, then, is the Lord on his throne in the heavens, surrounded by his saints in their resurrection bodies, all evidently employed in rendering active and willing service to him, and fulfilling his will in governing and ministering to those who are upon the earth. In reference to this it appears to be that we are told, "the living creatures ran and returned again as a flash of lightning."[1]

The ministry of angels, under the present dispensation, appears to bear a certain analogy to the ministry of the resurrection saints hereafter; and it enables us to form some idea of what that shall be. *Now*, the angels are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall

[1] Ezek. i. 26.

be heirs of salvation;"[1] but we read, that "unto the angels hath he not put in subjection *the world to come*, whereof we speak."[2] *Then*, the Divine government and purpose in the earth shall be carried on, not by angels, but by glorified men; by men who are the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem—whose privilege it is to live and reign with Christ, but who (as seen by Ezekiel) are ever engaged in fulfilling the Divine purpose on the earth, ascending and descending upon it.

Thus, by prophecy and by symbol do we find our faith and expectation directed towards this interesting period; and we are enabled, in some measure, to apprehend the distinction between the heavenly and the earthly, the incorruptible and the corruptible, the unchangeable, and that which is still capable of experiencing farther change.

[1] Heb. i. 14. [2] Heb. ii. 5.

This heavenly portion or department of the kingdom, with the revelation of the new Jerusalem, appears to have formed the object of expectation to good men from a very early period, and to have been connected in their minds with the final establishment of Israel in the land of Canaan.

Thus, when St. Paul refers to the case of Abraham as illustrative of that faith "which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," he says, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; *for he looked for a city which*

hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."[1]

But why was it so? Why could not Abraham have looked for this abiding city, and prepared for entering upon its enjoyment whilst dwelling in his native land? No country can in itself be more favourable than another for the cultivation of personal piety, or for the exercise of faith and hope. There must therefore have been some reason why Abraham connected the hope of this "city which hath foundations" with the land of Canaan, and not with the land of Chaldea. The reason, doubtless, was this, that Almighty God had revealed to him that in that land the promised Messiah was to suffer and to die, and that there, at a subsequent period, his glory was to be revealed.

This, moreover, is implied in what

[1] Heb. xi. 8–10.

our Lord said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see *my day*, and he saw it, and was glad." Abraham saw that day, though it was afar off. He saw the day of Messiah's sufferings, and he looked beyond that to the day of Messiah's glory.

It was amidst the glories of that latter period that he expected to appear once more in the body, and to have an entrance into that "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Hence, also, in the same chapter, when St. Paul had enumerated the cases of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he says, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a

country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire *a better country, that is an heavenly;* wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, *for he hath prepared for them a city.*"[1]

Here is precisely the same thing. The faith of these venerable patriarchs led them to expect their own resurrection and admission to the everlasting kingdom, in connexion with the fulfilment of the promises and purposes of God concerning the earthly Canaan.

It is of these worthies that the Apostle says,— "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." No!

[1] Heb. xi. 13–16.

They are not yet made perfect. Their happy spirits are, indeed, in joy and felicity, yet have they not received the promise, but are waiting till we, who are called to be the sons of God, are all made ready; and then shall they and we be perfected together, when the Lord Jesus shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. In that happy day shall we all take the places prepared for us in the heavenly department of the millennial kingdom. "The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

I. BUT THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM WILL BE PARTLY EARTHLY.—The earth is the local scene over which "a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall *rule* in judgment." It is on earth that

there shall be given him "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages shall serve him."

What a change for this earth—so long the scene of oppression and cruelty, of anarchy and strife—when it shall be placed under the righteous sceptre of the Prince of Peace! What a morning of joy shall it be when "the Lord shall be King over all the earth"—when "there shall be one Lord, and his name one!"

The first act of his righteous government will be the expulsion from his kingdom of that power which has been so mysteriously permitted to oppose the Divine will, and to deceive the nations. St. John thus describes the event:—"I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound

him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season."[1]

Thus, every hindrance to the glory of God, or to the happiness of his creatures on the earth, is removed. Antichrist, with all those powers which have opposed the Gospel of peace, have already been destroyed; the devil, which deceived them, is now cast out; and the prayer of the Psalmist, so long on record before the throne of grace, receives its final accomplishment—"Let sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord."[2]

And now "the kingdom is the Lord's,

[1] Rev. xx. 1–3. [2] Ps. civ. 35.

and he is the governor among the nations:" the whole earth is under his dominion; and righteousness and peace universally prevail.

1. In this new and happy state of things the most prominent feature is THE POSITION OF HIS ANCIENT PEOPLE.

"He hath remembered his mercy and truth toward the house of Israel, and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God." Now it will be seen how the Lord hath chosen Jacob to himself, and Israel to be his peculiar treasure. Whilst he shall be King over all the earth, he shall be specially *their* King: for "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."[1] Then the kingdom shall indeed be restored to

[1] Luke, i. 32, 33.

Israel, and that people shall become "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of their God."

In anticipation of that day the prophet says,—"Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people; he hath redeemed Jerusalem." Then shall Jerusalem become again "the city of the great King:" for it is there that he will specially manifest himself. Whilst his throne shall be in the heavens, we read of direct and personal manifestations of his presence on the earth, even as of old, when "the Lord God walked in the garden."[1] Thus, at the establishment of his kingdom, his feet are to stand upon the Mount of Olives; and in Ezekiel's vision of the Temple we read of the east gate being shut, "because

[1] Gen. iii. 8.

the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered by it. . . . It is for the Prince."[1] Thus shall "the Lord of Hosts reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously;"[2] and "the name of the city from that day shall be, *The Lord is there.*"

Then shall the words of Isaiah have their complete fulfilment,— "Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man passed through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. . . . . Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God

[1] Ezek. xliv. 2. [2] Isa. xxiv. 23.

thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."[1]

Jerusalem shall thus become a praise in the earth, and the centre of light and blessing to all nations: for "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, and he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."[2]

All shall rejoice in the righteous government of the Lord, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace: for the time has come when "all the ends of the world shall remember and

[1] Isa. lx. 15–20. [2] Ibid.

turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the governor among the nations."[1]

2. In such a state of things, THE RELIGIOUS, MORAL, AND INTELLECTUAL CONDITION OF MANKIND WILL BE INCALCULABLY IMPROVED. The great tempter being bound, and the Spirit poured from on high, darkness and ignorance, superstition and idolatry, shall flee away, and the knowledge of the Lord shall universally prevail: "they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for all shall know him, from the least even to the greatest."

Although sin and death will both exist during this period, they will form exceptional cases, and not, as at present, the leading features of the dispensation.

[1] Ps. xxii. 27, 28.

Human life will be greatly prolonged, for, "the child shall die an hundred years old," and health and happiness shall prove its constant attendants: "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."

In circumstances so favourable, and freed from all bodily oppression, what may not the powers of the human mind be expected to become? Men shall be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, and fitted as Adam was in Eden to see and pronounce the Divine purpose in all created things, and in all to give glory and praise to the Creator.

This state of things is earnestly to be desired. The intellectual improvement of our race, viewed as the great means of glorifying God, is a subject of deep importance. The increase of knowledge and the advancement of science in our

own times are causes for thankfulness to all true philanthropists; but, great as they seem to be, how far short do they come of accomplishing the end in view! Now, indeed, such arrangements as those of Natural History, Botany, and Mineralogy, are very interesting and instructive, but we expect a far higher measure of knowledge hereafter, which will enable mankind at once to recognise and admire the wisdom and goodness of God in all the works of his hand, and to render unto him the intelligent and grateful homage of thankfulness and praise.

Now, moreover, the confusion of languages forms a very serious impediment to the diffusion of knowledge and to the communion of saints, but there seems to be reason to conclude that in the millennial dispensation this disadvantage will be removed, for the Lord has said, "Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the

name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent."[1]

3. Meanwhile THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH SHALL EXPERIENCE A GREAT CHANGE. In anticipation of that time the Psalmist says, "Thou renewest the face of the earth;" and again, "The earth shall yield its increase." These words evidently imply a change from its present condition, perhaps the change referred to by St. Paul when he says, "the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."[2] Isaiah seems to describe this same period when (in connexion with the restoration of Israel) he says, "Ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

[1] Zeph. iii. 9. [2] Rom. viii 21.

Instead of the thorn shall come up the fig-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign which shall not be cut off."[1]

In the closest connexion with this is revealed the improved condition and consequent happiness of the various tribes of animated nature: "Then shall the creatures that fell under the curse of the first Adam share the blessing of the second. Whatsoever was lost shall be regained. The groans of misery shall be exchanged for hymns of praise. All animals, wild and tame, in the air, the earth, and the seas, shall be recovered from that state of vanity to which they were made subject by reason of Adam's transgression, and brought into harmonious and happy subjection to the rule of the Prince of Peace."

[1] Isa. lv. 12, 13.

Then shall Isaiah's glowing description of Messiah's kingdom be realised: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."[1]

In what has thus been described we seem to have the perfect antitype of Paradise. The earth is renewed and restored to its original beauty and ferti-

[1] Isa. xi. 6–9.

lity. It is placed under the dominion of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, with his bride, the Church. The various orders of inferior animals, all freed from the curse imposed upon them through man's transgression, and placed under Him of whom it is written, "Thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas."[1]

All things are again pronounced to be very good. The Divine Presence diffuses universal happiness and joy, and from thousands and tens of thousands of renewed hearts arises the grateful and unceasing acknowledgment of thanksgiving and praise: "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who hath set thy glory above the heavens."

[1] Ps. viii. 6–8.

Such is a brief outline of what the Holy Scriptures seem to testify respecting the constitution of the millennial kingdom. The view thus given is, doubtless, feeble and imperfect; but it is so, because as yet we see but "through a glass darkly." We are not yet prepared for the full blaze of the glory which shall be revealed, but we see enough to guide our faith and hope in the right direction, to assure us of good things to come, and to give reality to that "restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."[1]

It is in the expectation of this that the Apostle says, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now; and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan

[1] Acts, iii. 21.

within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."[1]

Are these words descriptive of our state of mind? Have we received the first-fruits of the Spirit? and under his sacred influences do we groan within ourselves, waiting for the redemption of our bodies in connexion with the deliverance of creation and the manifestation of the sons of God?

No questions can be more important than these. To have the first-fruits of the Spirit is to possess the earnest of the inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. It is to have the seal of the living God upon our foreheads. Without this, all mere profession of Christianity, or intellectual knowledge of its leading truths, will be in vain.

Let us seek, then, by prayer and sup-

[1] Rom. viii. 22, 23.

plication, to possess more of the influences of that eternal Spirit, who is at once the Comforter, the Sanctifier, and the Teacher of the people of God. Let us live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, ever mortifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, and we shall know by experience what the Apostle means when he says that "we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

"The whole creation groans,
And waits to hear that voice
That shall restore her comeliness,
And make her wastes rejoice.

Come, Lord, and wipe away
The curse, the sin, the stain,
And make this blighted world of ours
Thine own fair world again."

CHAPTER V.

THE EVENTS WHICH SHALL SEPARATE THE MILLENNIAL FROM THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM.

In the preceding chapter an outline has been given of the probable constitution of the millennial kingdom. We have reason to conclude that heaven and earth will be re-united during that happy period; that in the heavens the Lord will establish his throne, where he will be surrounded by his glorified saints, now made unto him "kings and priests," and exalted to reign with him over the earth: whilst on the earth itself there will be universal happiness and peace—the great tempter bound, the knowledge of the Lord everywhere diffused, and righteous-

ness the leading characteristic of human affairs.

Of the kingdom thus established it is written that it "*cannot be moved;*" and it is written again, that "Unto the Son he saith, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom;" and again, that "the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom and possess the kingdom *for ever, even for ever and ever.*"

All this, however, is to be tested, and it appears to be for this end that the events which succeed the millennial reign are permitted to occur.

It is to make manifest to the whole universe of God that the work of our Lord Jesus Christ is for eternity, that his throne is immovable, and that the inheritance of his saints is incorruptible and undefiled, and cannot fade away.

Seated in glory with their Lord, the risen saints are removed far above the

power of Satan, and the possibility of change. Neither can our Lord's righteous government on earth be overthrown; nor his purpose in Israel be frustrated; nor his name cease to be excellent in all the earth.

All this is now to be proved, to the glory of God, and to the final overthrow of the powers of darkness.

I. For this purpose a last great defection is permitted to take place, which shall be succeeded by the final struggle between good and evil, light and darkness, the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of hell.

We read, that "when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth."[1] Here is the source of the apostasy, and here is the

[1] Rev. xx. 7.

instigator of that last and daring insult to the Majesty of heaven which this earth shall ever witness. It is Satan — the great enemy of our race, by whom our first parents were deceived, and who ever since has laboured to effect our ruin — it is he who is the author of this dark and hellish work. How little do men realize the existence of this great adversary, or think of the power which he is so mysteriously permitted to exercise in this fallen world! Yet on no subject have we more definite statements in the Holy Scriptures. The very names and titles given to him are sufficient to arouse us from our indifference, and to constrain us to watchfulness and prayer. He is described as that old serpent, which is called the Devil and Satan — the prince of the power of the air — the accuser of the brethren — the deceiver — a liar and murderer from the beginning. These

are formidable titles, and they should make a deep and solemn impression upon our minds. This is no power to be thought lightly of, or to be encountered in our own strength. We need the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand him in the evil day, and having done all to stand. There is but one source of safety for us. It is in fighting manfully under *His* banner, who was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil; who has himself bruised the serpent's head, and has promised that he will, in due time, bruise him under our feet.

Such is the power—the dark and terrible power, which is once more to be let loose—although it be for a little season. We read, that "he goes out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth." But how is this? Are not the nations long since converted to God? And have they not

for a thousand years been living in righteousness and peace?

The nations have, indeed, for a thousand years enjoyed incalculable blessings. They have been protected from Satanic influence and power; they have been governed in perfect righteousness; the knowledge of the Lord has covered the earth as the waters cover the sea; and vast, indeed, has been the harvest of souls prepared during that happy period for the heavenly garner: but, even in circumstances so favourable, and with advantages so great, there are many who have not yielded the affections of their hearts to the Lord, nor experienced the inward power and unction of his Spirit. They have been the recipients of inestimable blessings, but they have not rendered again according to the benefit done unto them; and, even amidst millennial light and blessedness, "the God, in whose hand their breath

is, and whose are all their ways, have they not glorified."

It is upon these that Satan now exerts his unhallowed influence and power. What the particular form of the temptation is we are not informed; but so numerous are his victims, so many the hearts found swept and garnished, and prepared for his reception, that we are told "the number of them is as the sand of the sea."[1]

There is important instruction and a very solemn warning conveyed to ourselves in all this. We may be in the midst of religious light and privileges, and yet our sins may be unpardoned, our hearts unsanctified, and our souls unsaved. An inspired Apostle has exhorted us to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith. It is meet and right so to do. No man will ever regret

[1] Rev. xx. 8.

having done so. Let us all do so. Let us ascertain "whose we are, and whom we serve." Let us seek to know if the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us; and let us anxiously inquire whether, amidst the trials and temptations of this mortal life, we are "being kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

Happy are they who, after careful self-examination, are able in the sight of God satisfactorily to answer these inquiries, and in whose experience "the Spirit beareth witness with their spirit that they are the children of God." They need not fear the power or subtilty of their great adversary. They shall in all things be more than conquerors through him who loved them, and none shall be able to pluck them from his hand!

And now, behold the last sad develop-

ment of what is in man; the last dark manifestation of ingratitude and rebellion against the holy and righteous God! The vast multitude described as "Gog and Magog, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea," are gathered together to battle. To battle! against whom? Against the God who made them and the Saviour who died for them, and against that sceptre of righteousness of which they have experienced the blessedness! In their blind infatuation "they compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city!"[1]

It is all in vain. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." They present themselves before him only to receive their final doom. In the brief, but comprehensive words of Scripture, we are told that "fire came down from God out

[1] Rev. xx. 9.

of heaven and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."[1]

Thus all rebellion against the High and Holy One is for ever put down. His kingdom is shown to be immoveable; the inheritance of his saints to be incorruptible; and the Seed of the woman who bruised the serpent's head, has bruised him under the feet of all who have ever loved and trusted in their Lord.

All enemies are thus put under his feet. The kingdom of conquest is over, and is about to be delivered up to God, even the Father. The millennial age has ended, and the ages of everlasting glory are about to be opened to our view.

II. There is, however, one grand trans-

[1] Rev. xx. 10.

action more, which is revealed to us as intervening—the most momentous of all. It is the JUDGMENT OF THE QUICK AND DEAD—the day when all who have ever lived upon the earth "must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

In the 20th chapter of Revelation, St. John thus describes this great event. He says, "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

"And death and hell were cast into

the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

How unspeakably grand and sublime is this description! It is, moreover, full of deep and important instruction; for each point is evidently designed to convey to us some leading feature of the great reality.

The first object seen by the Apostle was the seat of the righteous Judge. He describes it as "*a great white throne;*" thus combining the ideas of absolute authority with perfect purity; for it shall be unsullied by any act of injustice or unrighteousness. He speaks of the Judge as "*him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them:*" as if the brightness of his glory was so transcendent that, as the stars become invisible before the rising

sun, so the earth and the heaven shrink into insignificance before him. And who is this King of glory? It is *He*, "who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor." It is that Friend who loved us, and died for our sins upon the cross. It is that merciful and faithful High Priest who now maketh intercession for us. It is HE who shall sit upon that great white throne, and be the Judge of the quick and dead; for it is written, that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, because he is the Son of man."[1]

The Apostle describes the persons who shall be summoned to this great tribunal. He says, "*I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.*" What an assembly! the dead of all ages and generations; the poor and the des-

[1] John, v. 22.

pised — the pauper and the slave — the men who lived and died uncared for and unknown; and beside them the kings and rulers of the earth — the chief captains, and the mighty men — but all now on the same level, all human distinctions gone, for "there is no respect of persons with God."

Amidst the awful solemnity of that scene he tells us that "*the books are opened.*" What books? Let conscience unravel to each of us the meaning of this symbol! The books which contain the records of human life, and which have their exact counterpart in the memories and consciences of men. All that has been done in the body: the words of the lips — the actions of the life — the thoughts of the heart — all shall be found recorded there, "for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." These books

were opened: but another book was opened. It is THE BOOK OF LIFE. How blessed above all men are they whose names shall be found therein! They are the faithful soldiers and servants of Christ, who have confessed his name upon the earth, and borne their cross, and suffered for his sake; and now the time has come when, faithful to his promise, he will confess their names before his Father and before the angels.

The Apostle, moreover, discloses to us the grand rule of the judgment, the grounds on which it shall proceed. He says, they "*were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*" Thus, the final appeal is to their works. The works of the righteous shall afford evidence that they were wrought in God—the fruits of a true and living faith—the effects of the Holy Spirit's gracious influences on the soul; and the works of

the unrighteous shall rise in dark and terrible array against them, and testify that they have never repented of their sins, nor come to the blood of Christ for pardon, nor taken up their cross to follow him, and now "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and they are not saved."—"The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Then shall the warning of the Apostle be felt in deep and awful reality, when he said, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: for he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

The great sowing time is past, and the great reaping time is come.

And now, as the eye of the Apostle rests on that wondrous scene, he adds,—"*And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell gave up*

the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to his works." How unspeakably grand must the scene have been which he thus beheld! —and if such be the scenic representation, what must be the reality! That reality we must all behold. Yes! We must stand before that great white throne, and look on him who sits upon it, from whose face the earth and the heavens shall flee away. We must see the opening of the books, and hear the records which they contain; we must hear the approving sentence, "Come, ye blessed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" or we must listen to the awful doom, "Depart, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"

But it has been sometimes asked, Why this awful scene? why this summons of the whole family of man to

appear before the judgment-seat of Christ? Has not their fate been long since virtually decided by death? Have not the souls of the righteous departed to be with Christ, and have not the souls of the wicked been cast into hell? It is true that this great separation has already taken place; but can we suppose that the principles which have guided this decision have been universally approved? Can we not imagine that in the dark abode of the lost the Divine Name is blasphemed, and the Divine love and mercy denied, and the Divine justice impugned?

Now here is the grand assize! Here is the manifestation, before the universe, of the principles on which the Most High has acted in his righteous dealings with the sons of men. It is the final and complete vindication of the moral government of God.

Hence the appointment of this day—

this great and dreadful day, when "God shall judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained."

"Thus came the day—
The day that many thought would never come,
That all the wicked wished should never come,
That all the righteous had expected long;
Day greatly feared, and yet too little feared
By him who feared it most; day laughed at much
By the profane, the trembling day of all
Who laughed; day when all shadows passed—all dreams,
When substance, when reality commenced.

* * * * *

Day most important held, prepared for most,
By every rational, wise, and holy man;
Day of eternal gain for worldly loss;
Day of eternal loss for worldly gain;
Great day of terror, vengeance, woe, despair;
Revealer of all secrets, thoughts, desires,
Rein-trying, heart-investigating day,
That stood between eternity and time,
Reviewed all past, determined all to come,
And bound all destinies for evermore!
Believing day of unbelief; great day,
That set in proper light the affairs of earth,
And justified the government divine!

Great day! what can we more? what should we more?
Great triumph-day of God's incarnate Son?
Great day of glory to the Almighty God!
Day whence the everlasting years begin
Their date, new era in eternity,
And oft referred to in the song of heaven."

CHAPTER VI.

THE KINGDOM IN ITS EVERLASTING GLORY.

THE millennial age has ended, and the kingdom of God is now revealed to us in its everlasting glory. The last great shaking of the heavens and earth is over, and the things which cannot be shaken remain. Old things are passed away, and all things are made new. Sin and Satan are expelled from the earth, and all rebellion and opposition to the Divine will are for ever put down.

There are many references to this holy and perfect state in the Scriptures; but it is chiefly in the two last chapters

of the Apocalypse that we find anything approaching to a systematic view of its glory and blessedness.

There, the Lord has been pleased to reveal to us the things which shall be hereafter, when the millennial rest is over, and the dead have been judged according to their works;—when the age to come has ended, and the ages of ages commence their ceaseless course.

The ideas which we are able to form of the objects thus presented to our view are faint indeed. We can, however, discern something of the surpassing grandeur of the scene—of the perfection of the new creation—of the glorious things spoken of the heavenly city—of the happiness of the saints, and of the joy and blessedness which are universally diffused by the presence of God and of the Lamb.

Nor are the thoughts thus suggested to us merely of general import. There

are certain leading features which are clearly defined; and we find in them the perfection of all that God has promised, or that his saints have hoped for.

I. There is THE MATERIAL CREATION IN A NEW AND INCORRUPTIBLE CONDITION. St. John says, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."[1] The destiny of the earth is a subject of the deepest interest. Revelation and science unite in leading us to anticipate some future glorious display of Divine wisdom and power in connexion with it. A great Christian philosopher,[2] who writes without reference to prophecy, thus expresses himself: "Man, at the first, had for his place this world; and at the same time, for his privilege, an

[1] Rev. xxi. 1.

[2] Dr. Chalmers.

unclouded fellowship with God; and for his prospect, an immortality, which death was neither to intercept nor put an end to. He was terrestrial in respect to condition, and yet celestial both in respect of character and enjoyments.

"The common imagination that we have of paradise on the other side of death, is that of a lofty, aërial region, where the inmates float in ether, or are mysteriously suspended upon nothing; where all the warm and sensible accompaniments, which give such an expression of strength, and life, and colouring to our present habitation, are attenuated into a sort of spiritual element, that is meagre and imperceptible, and utterly uninviting to the eye of mortals here below, where every vestige of materialism is done away, and nothing left but certain unearthly scenes, that have no power of allurement, and certain

unearthly ecstasies with which it is felt impossible to sympathise. The holders of this imagination forget all the while that there is no necessary connexion between materialism and sin; that the world which we now inhabit had all the solidity and amplitude of its present materialism before sin entered into it; that God, so far, on that account, from looking slightly upon it, after it had received the last touch of his creating hand, reviewed the earth, the waters, and the firmament, and all the green herbage, with the living creatures, and the man whom he had raised in dominion over them, and 'he saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was all very good.' They forget that, on the birth of materialism, when it stood out in the freshness of those glories which the great Architect of nature had impressed upon it, that 'the morning stars sang together, and all the

sons of God shouted for joy.' They forget the appeals that are everywhere made in the Bible to his material workmanship; and how, from the face of these visible heavens, and the garniture of this earth which we tread upon, the greatness and goodness of God are reflected on the view of his worshippers.

"No, my brethren, the object of the administration we sit under is to extirpate sin, but it is not to sweep away materialism. By the convulsions of the last day it may be shaken and broken down from its present arrangement, and thrown into such fitful agitations as that the whole of its existing framework shall fall to pieces, and with a heat so fervent as to melt the most solid elements may it be utterly dissolved. And thus may the earth again become without form and void, but without one particle of its substance going into annihilation. Out of the ruins of this second chaos may an-

other heaven and another earth be made to arise, and a new materialism, with other aspects of magnificence and beauty, emerge from the wreck of this mighty transformation, and the world be peopled, as before, with the varieties of material loveliness, and space be again lighted up into a firmament of material splendour."[1]

What is thus ably described as in itself highly probable, is revealed to us in the Scriptures as most sure and certain. St. Peter reminds us that this planet has already experienced one great change (since it became the habitation of men) through the agency of water, and he informs us that it shall yet experience another change, through the agency of fire. He says that "the heavens and the earth which are now are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and per-

[1] For the testimony of some other distinguished men of science on the same subject, see Appendix B.

dition of ungodly men;"[1] and he adds, "nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

We learn from the discoveries of science, that the agency thus referred to is already prepared—that the interior of our globe is in a state of intense heat, ready at any moment to obey the fiat of the Almighty, and to bring to pass his revealed purpose on the earth. This is sufficiently evident from the ejection, from time to time, of boiling streams of lava from below the primitive rocks, and from the fact, that the deeper we penetrate into the earth, the higher is the degree of temperature obtained.[2]

[1] 2 Pet. iii. 7.

[2] "There is a mine in Cornwall, one of the lev of which is so hot, that although a stream of c water is purposely allowed to flow through it order to reduce the temperature, the miners are c pelled to work nearly naked, and will bathe in w

The general view conveyed to us by many passages of Scripture is, that the heavens of our planet shall receive their grand purification when the Lord descends into them at the opening of the millennial dispensation; but that the earth will receive its final baptism by fire, at the close of that period.

During the Millennial Sabbath, the creation does not appear to experience any decided change; excepting in so far as regards its deliverance from vanity and oppression. The animal and vegetable kingdoms evidently continue as at present. The former, however, in the enjoyment of a state of happiness which is now denied to them; and the latter

at 80° to cool themselves! In another mine in the same county, which has been carried to the immense depth of 320 fathoms, the temperature is hotter than on the surface in the warmest summer day; for while a very hot day will raise the thermometer to 82°, this instrument in the mine rises to nearly 100°.—Ellis' *Chemistry of Creation*, p. 114.

manifesting, in a far higher degree, the wisdom and glory of the Creator, by the surpassing beauty of their organization.

At the close of the Millennium, however, a much greater change is clearly indicated; for when St. John says, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away," he adds, "*and there was no more sea.*" This last statement undoubtedly implies a total and complete change from the present condition of things. Without the sea, it would be impossible for animal or vegetable life to exist as at present.[1] Hence it may

[1] On this interesting subject the author of the *Chemistry of Creation* thus writes:—"Since all the elementary constituents derived by the vegetable world from the soil are obtained by the agency of water, and in a state of solution in that fluid, and also, since water itself forms a large and most important part of all vegetable tissues, and assists to produce an equally large portion of all vegetable substances, it follows that vegetation as now con-

be inferred, that the scene described in these closing chapters of the Apocalypse is post-millennial; and is intended to reveal to us a new and incorruptible

stituted could not exist in a world deprived of water. It might, in fact, be more easy for us to conceive of vegetation existing without an earth on which to rest — as, for instance, is the case with large forests of sea-weed — than without water, which plays so important a part in the vital processes of plants.

"But whence is this water derived? Undoubtedly primarily from the sea, which may, probably, be regarded as the parent of all other waters on our globe — of the rain, snow, and vapour, and through them, of rivers, lakes, and all inland waters. If, therefore, the sea be removed from our planet, it is most certain that the present vegetable world would perish with its removal, or become constituted on a new system of chemical and vital laws. And, if vegetation be thus dependent on the sea, so likewise is the kingdom of animals (including man himself) dependent upon *it*.

"The simple statement, therefore, that 'there shall be no more sea,' necessitates the supposition that an entirely different order both of vegetable and animal life — if, indeed, these terms have any longer a value — must be introduced therewith."— R. E.

state, even that grand climax, wherein the works of creation and redemption shall be perfected in him, who is "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end"—who sits upon the throne, and says, "Behold, I make all things new."

All things are, indeed, made new. The effects of sin are for ever obliterated from this earth; and the introduction of evil is rendered impossible. The consequences of man's former disobedience are forgotten; for "there shall be no more death: neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

II. To the earth thus renewed and perfected, THE HEAVENLY CITY, THE ABODE OF THE GLORIFIED SAINTS, IS REPRESENTED AS DESCENDING. The Apostle says, "I, John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." In the symbol thus employed

there are evidently two things contained —the city with its inhabitants; the redeemed and their glorious abode."[1]

As the Apostle gazed upon this wonderful spectacle—the heavenly city descending to the earth in all its magnificence and glory—he tells us that there came unto him one of the seven angels, which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with him,

[1] "By the term 'city' we understand but *place* and *inhabitants*. Place, because man subsisting as a compound being, consisting of spirit and matter, and that matter though glorified, being his through eternity, there is a needs-be that he must have place as his abode. Then, as to inhabitants—these of course exist, they being of a city the most essential part, and bearing to the dwelling the same relation as spirit does to body."—*Bloomsbury Lectures for* 1849, No. 10, by Rev. M. Brock.

The same thing is true of the symbol used to describe the apostate city. It evidently includes the city and the church. See this, very ably discussed, in Wordsworth on the Babylon of the Apocalypse.

saying, "Come hither, and I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife."

Then follows a description of matchless beauty; conveyed to us in language so simple, yet so sublime, that it savours more of heaven than of earth. He says: "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

"And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

"On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

"And the wall of the city had twelve

foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb.

"And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal.

"And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper; and the city was pure gold like unto clear glass.

"And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth,

beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

"And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

"And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

"And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

"And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

"And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

How wonderful is this description! How greatly does it transcend what we are at present capable of realising!

Here is the city to which the Patriarchs looked, and of which the Prophets spake, and concerning which the Psalmist said, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God."

The Apostle reminds us that *its origin is divine.* It comes down out of heaven from God. No human mind has devised it. No human architect has planned it. No human hands have built it. It is the city "whose builder and maker is God."

This city is *unchangeable.* It can experience neither overthrow nor decay. All earthly cities, however great and renowned, have soon passed away; and

as we look upon their ruins we are often and forcibly reminded that here "we have no continuing city:" but of this city it is emphatically said that "*it hath foundations.*"

The city, no less than the glorified Church within it, is the workmanship of God, and of both it may be affirmed that they are "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."

This city is *perfect in holiness.* It is the *holy* Jerusalem. In the cities of the world the moral atmosphere has often been polluted by the very circumstance of many human beings being congregated within them, but it is not so here. Into this city "there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth;" and on the sacred intercourse to be enjoyed within it, perfect holiness is stamped. This is beautifully indicated by the several symbols employed, for we read that "its gates

are of pearl," and that "the street of the city is pure gold, like unto transparent glass."

The enjoyment of society forms one of the great charms of earthly cities, but what tongue can express or what pen can describe the society to be assembled here? In this city Patriarchs and Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs, shall meet together and walk its golden streets. Here, the redeemed from all nations shall assemble. Here, the friends in Christ, whom we have known and loved on earth, shall all be found. What joyful meetings shall here take place! What histories shall here be told! What songs of praise shall here be sung! What glory shall be given to God and to the Lamb, for the blessings of creation, for the unfathomable love of redemption, and for all the gracious, though often mysterious dealings of his providence, whereby he has separated his

people from the things of sense and time, and prepared them for the glories of eternity![1]

We have seen that the new heavens and the new earth will be glorious, and that the city which cometh down out of heaven from God will be glorious, but yet there is a glory that excelleth.

III. It is the fact, that this is revealed as the local scene where THE IMMEDIATE PRESENCE OF ALMIGHTY GOD WILL BE MANIFESTED THROUGHOUT ETERNITY.—This is indicated by a variety of statements. Thus, early in the vision, St. John hears a voice out of heaven, saying,—"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be

[1] The reader will find some important observations on the heavenly city in *The Eternal Day*, by Rev. H. Bonar, D.D., chap. ix.; and in *Bloomsbury Lectures*, 1849, No. 10, by Rev. M. Brock.

their God." And again, in describing the heavenly city, he says,—"I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." And again: "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads."

How grand is the climax to which this brings us! Here, indeed, is the glorious completion of the work of redemption; and man, created in the image of God, but expelled from his presence, degraded and lost through sin, is now presented in Christ Jesus, renewed and glorified, and permitted to see the face of the Most High, and to walk in the light of his presence, for ever.

Such are the glimpses which we are permitted to possess of the kingdom in its everlasting glory. The heavens and the earth are renewed and perfected—

the glorious abode of the saints is fully revealed, and there is the beatific vision of the Most High. The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, through eternity. In all this how far is the original work of creation surpassed, and how completely is Paradise lost eclipsed by the transcendent beauties of Paradise regained! The first Paradise was capable of experiencing a change; but this shall know no change for ever. In the earthly Paradise the tempter lurked; but into this no tempter ever comes. The earthly Paradise was watered by an earthly river; but this possesses the pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, which proceedeth from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the first Paradise there were the alternations of evening and morning, night and day; but of this we are told, "there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord

God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

The first Paradise was a garden, and its possessors were a single pair; but the second Paradise is a city teeming with glorified inhabitants, and interspersed with gardens, and rivers, and trees, and fountains of water.

What the actual distinction is between the glorified inhabitants of the heavenly city and "the nations of them that are saved," it is difficult for us to realise; but all must be sinless and holy. It appears, however, that there is a divine ordinance through which the latter pass into the state enjoyed by the former. We read that "in the midst of the street, and on either side the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: *and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*" But

where there is no sickness and no pain there can be no healing, in the sense in which we now understand it. May not this, then, be intended to describe the divine ordinance for the renewal of life, as the tree of life would have been to our first parents had they never sinned? If so, how full of meaning are the words, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city!"

It was at the close of these wonderful communications that our blessed Saviour revealed himself to St. John, saying,— "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." And in what words of surpassing grace and love did he add, "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that

heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Reader! will you receive this gracious invitation? The glories of the everlasting kingdom are within your reach. They are freely offered to you *in* him and *by* him, who is "the way, and the truth, and the life." Arise, and return unto God by him; repent, and believe in Christ, and all things shall be yours; for "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS — THE PROBABLE NEAR APPROACH OF THE KINGDOM.

THE promise of a kingdom has at all times formed the object of faith and expectation to the people of God, and, irrespective of the times and seasons, it becomes them to be waiting for it, ever praying, in the words which our Lord has taught us, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." There are, however, certain general signs of its approach, revealed to us in the Scriptures, to which it is evidently the Divine will that we should take heed.

Our Lord reproved the Sadducees for neglecting the signs of their own times,

a due attention to which would have shown them that they were living in the days of the Son of Man. He has, himself, given us certain signs of his appearing and kingdom, and has told us, when we see these things begin to come to pass, to lift up our heads, for our redemption draweth nigh. It cannot, then, be wrong wisely to consider these. We would indeed remember, that "of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father only," and that on a subject so sacred, all carnal curiosity is forbidden; but, on the other hand, we would not forget that it is "to them that look for him he will appear the second time without sin unto salvation;" and that it is through watchfulness and prayer that we may hope to be counted worthy "to escape those things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Have we then, in the events of our own times, any indications of the near approach of the kingdom of God? We think that we have, and that these are of so remarkable a nature as to call for the serious consideration of all who profess and call themselves Christians.

I. There is THE VERY GENERAL PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. — Our Lord himself gave this as a sign of the approaching close of the present dispensation, and of his own appearing and kingdom. He said, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come."[1]

The same thing is represented to us in a very striking manner in the fourteenth chapter of Revelation, where St. John describes "an angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting

[1] Matt. xxiv. 14.

gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."[1]

The symbol here employed is clearly intended to set forth some general and rapid work of evangelization throughout the world; and it is worthy of observation, that the description thus given is followed immediately by the announcement of the fall of Babylon, and the appearing of the Son of Man.[2]

Is there, or is there not, such a work going on in these times? Can it be denied that such a work not only exists, but forms one of the leading features of our own times, so that the present has

[1] Rev. xiv. 6, 7. [2] Rev. xiv. 8, 14.

been truly described as the "era of Evangelic Missions?"

Amidst the revival of popery, infidelity, and religious errors of all kinds, the Gospel is being preached more extensively than at any former period. Since the opening of the present century, the Bible has been translated into more than 160 different languages, through the labours of one society alone, whilst other societies have been engaged in the same great work. During the same period, missionaries have gone forth to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south. The glad tidings of salvation have been freely and fully proclaimed, and Christian churches have arisen in almost every part of the great moral wilderness of the heathen world.

This work is evidently of God. It is his Spirit who has moved upon the face of the once slumbering churches; and to himself we would ascribe the praise.

He is gathering together that innumerable multitude from all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who are hereafter to appear before his throne; and in doing so, he gives to his waiting people a sure and certain sign that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

II. Another sign is clearly presented to us in THE REMARKABLE DECLINE OF THE OTTOMAN POWER.—What a woe has that power proved to Christendom in former times! From the fall of Constantinople in 1453, till within the last forty years, how unbounded was its prosperity, and how fair and fertile were those portions of the globe over which the Crescent waved in triumph! The word of prophecy, however, had foretold that it should not be always so. The river Euphrates (believed, by a majority of the most approved writers on prophecy, to be the symbol of the Turkish Empire) was to be dried up, that

the way for the Kings of the East might be prepared.[1] Men who had studied those portions of the Scriptures of truth, foresaw that a long series of reverses—typified by the drying up of the waters of a river—would overtake the Turkish Empire, and one writer of the last century suggested the year 1820 as the probable period when these adverse circumstances would commence. They did commence at that time. In the year 1820 came the revolt of Ali Pasha, which was followed in 1821 by the general revolt of the Greeks in the Morea, Wallachia, and Moldavia. In 1827 the battle of Navarino was fought, when the Turkish fleet was wholly destroyed by the combined fleets of England, France, and Russia. This was followed by the loss of Algiers, and at no great interval, by the revolt of the

[1] Rev. xvi. 12.

Egyptian Pasha, Mahomet Ali. During these events the country has been almost depopulated by the special judgments of God—by earthquake, famine, and pestilence. And now, as we look upon the remains of that once mighty empire and formidable power, we may truly say that the waters of the river are well-nigh dried up. This has become the more striking from the fact, that the great Western Powers have lately combined to protect Turkey from the aggressive designs of Russia. The Czar has, indeed, been arrested in his progress, but not so has the drying up of the mystical Euphrates. All human efforts to revive the Ottoman Power have been in vain; and they shall be so, for the hand of the Most High is preparing the way for his people; and they, whom he designates "the Kings of the East," shall soon appear on the great theatre of human

affairs, and take that place which Divine Providence has appointed for them.

III. We have a farther sign of the times in THE PRESENT POSITION OF THE PAPACY.

From the outbreak of the great French Revolution in 1789, to the battle of Waterloo in 1815, how terrible were the judgments which descended on the Papacy, and on the kingdoms connected with it! Alison's *History of Modern Europe*, and James's *History of Naval Warfare*, form very remarkable, because undesigned, commentaries on the prophecies which refer to that period. Then, indeed, did "the ten horns hate the whore, and make her flesh desolate, and burn her with fire." So signal were the effects of these judgments, that the Papacy seemed to be expiring; and in 1829, when the Roman Catholic Relief Bill was under discussion in the British Parlia-

ment, we were assured by great authorities, both in and out of Parliament, by Statesmen and Divines, that Popery was amongst the things which were but are not, and that in our own enlightened times it could never again raise its devoted head.

There were some who thought otherwise. They were the minority; and it may be that there were amongst them a few narrow-minded and illiberal men: but they were not all of that class. There were some who were the true friends of Civil and Religious Liberty; who were anxious to reform abuses, and to extend to their fellow-subjects, of all denominations, those political advantages which they themselves enjoyed, so far as this could be done with safety: but they had studied the word of prophecy, and they saw clear indications there that a revival of the spirit of Popery would take place before the final destruction of that power.

They found it written, that whilst the great river Euphrates was being dried up, "three unclean spirits" were to come forth from the old sources of evil—"out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet;" and that under these unhallowed influences the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, should be gathered together to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

Here was a clear and distinct announcement that, amongst other evils, there should be a revival of the spirit of Popery in these last times.

Has it been so, or not? What would have been thought of that man's sagacity who, in 1829, would have ventured to predict that, within twenty years, some of the most accomplished members of the University of Oxford, and divines of no mean standing in the Church of England, would leave her communion,

and embrace the unfathomed superstitions of the Church of Rome?

How would that honourable Member have been regarded who, in 1829, would have risen in his place in the House of Commons, and expressed his conviction, that some of the Members of that House might live to see the apparently expiring Papacy insult the Sovereign and Parliament of England, and its adherents laugh at all the oaths and engagements then so solemnly entered into? Yet it has been even so; and within twenty-one years from that date, the British Parliament was called on to repel an "insolent and insidious" act of aggression on the part of the Papal Power!

The time, however, is short. The long period of 1260 years, so mysteriously granted to this apostate power, must be near its close. Great Babylon is coming into remembrance before God, that he may give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. It is

needful that she should also come into remembrance before men; in order that they may glorify God when his judgments descend upon her. Hence the present revival of Popery is permitted; and hence the civilized world has been startled by such acts as the announcement of the monstrous dogma of the Immaculate Conception; to intimate to all men that the Papacy is not and cannot be reformed, and that Rome has neither lowered her blasphemous pretensions nor repented of her deeds.

There is one sign given to us of the approaching destruction of Rome, which claims our special attention. It is this —"*the great city was divided into three parts.*" This statement has led the students of prophecy to expect that, immediately before the end, either the city of Rome, or the kingdoms in connexion with her, shall present a tripartite division in some way or other. It is, however, worthy of consideration, whether

this may not already have taken place; and whether Rome is not, at this moment, divided into three parts. Is Rome a city that is at unity in itself? Certainly not. If so, how many are the parties contending within her? They are exactly *three* in number—the Papal party, the National Italian party, and the French. If any one of these will retire, the difficulty will be over, and the Italian question solved. It would be presumptuous to affirm that there will be no farther fulfilment of this prophecy; but it is worthy of serious consideration, that from the great revolutionary period of 1848 to the present time, Rome has been *virtually* divided into three parts.

If such be the present position of affairs, the events which are to intervene between this time and the appearing of our Lord are few indeed; and it is impossible to say whether some of these may not be considered

as accompaniments rather than prevenient events.[1]

There seems to be ground for expecting that, at no very distant period, the city of Rome will be suddenly and completely destroyed by the immediate judgment of God. The Papacy will, however, survive that event, and apparently will meet its final doom in the Holy Land.

We expect also to hear of some decided movement amongst the Jews, the indication of that spirit of repentance and humiliation before the Lord God of their fathers, in which they are represented as returning to their land.

We look, moreover, for that time of general, political, and social perplexity, foretold by the Prophet Daniel as occurring at the time of Israel's deliverance, and which appears to be the same

[1] For our present place in the prophetic calendar see Appendix C.

period as that so solemnly described by our Lord when he said, "On earth shall be distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, and men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers which are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory."

Besides these events we look for no other. The mystery of God shall then be finished, and the time come when the saints of the Most High shall possess the kingdom.

If these things be so, our position is peculiarly solemn; and truly may we say, "What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!"

Let us await the event *with great sobriety*. We are frequently exhorted

to this in connexion with the coming of our Lord. The Apostle says, "Let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation." This evidently implies more than sobriety in the moderate use of temporal mercies: it includes sobriety in our religious profession and conduct also. Let all who love their Saviour remember this. It is not by excitement or enthusiasm that we shall be made ready for his appearing. It is by the increase of faith, and holiness, and love. Our Lord reminded us of this when he said, "If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or Lo, there; believe it not . . . . . If they shall say, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: Behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not." And in the same discourse he told us how he would have his servants to be occupied

when he comes; for he added, "Who, then, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods."

If, then, we would be prepared to stand before him at his coming, let us be engaged in calmly and consistently "doing the will of God from the heart."

Let us, moreover, *exercise continual watchfulness.* We are told that as a snare shall that day come on all them that dwell on the earth. To mankind in general, the aspect of affairs will evidently present a very deceptive appearance, and even the people of God may be tempted to slumber and sleep. Hence our Lord so frequently exhorts us to watchfulness. "Watch, therefore, for

ye know not what hour your Lord shall come;" and again, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." The prevalence of religious errors in the last days renders this peculiarly necessary. It is by these insidious seeds of evil that many shall be deceived,—The form of godliness, with the denial of its power; the profession of Christianity, with secret hatred to its essential truths; this will be instrumental in causing the love of many to wax cold. Hence the necessity for constant watchfulness, and happy shall he be who maintains it; for "he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

And let us not forget the importance *of continuing instant in prayer.* This is ever linked with the exercise of watchfulness. "Watch, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be counted worthy to escape those things which

shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." It is very gratifying and encouraging that, at this momentous crisis, a spirit of prayer has manifested itself throughout the world. "An hearty desire to pray" is the gift of Him who is the hearer and the answerer of prayer. It is, doubtless, for some gracious purpose that he has shed abroad this grace in so many hearts. May this be fully and speedily accomplished! May his name be hallowed in all the Churches! May his dear people be separated from the world, sanctified through the truth, and united in bonds of brotherly kindness and love. So may we hope to be "found of him in peace, without spot and blameless;" and to have "an entrance ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Appendix.

A.

WITHOUT attaching any authority to patristical tradition, or claiming for it any weight, it is nevertheless interesting as a matter of fact to know that all the principal Fathers of the first two centuries and a half held the doctrine of a Millennium, and looked for the establishment of Christ's Kingdom visibly on the earth.

The following well-known extracts are added for the interest of the general reader:—

Justin Martyr wrote about A.D. 140. In his *Dialogues with Trypho* he thus writes:—"Tell me," says Trypho, "do you affirm, that this place, Jerusalem, is to be really rebuilt; and do you expect that your people shall be gathered together there, and live happily with Christ, together with the Patriarchs and Prophets, and those of our race, and those that became proselytes before your Christ came; or

have you proceeded to affirm these things that you might seem to overcome us in argument?" To this Justin replies, "I am not such a wretch, O Trypho, as to speak differently from what I think. I have, therefore, already confessed to you that I and many others are of this opinion. . . . . But I have also told you that many of those Christians who are of pure and pious sentiments do not acknowledge this . . . . But I, and all Christians altogether orthodox, know, both that there will be a resurrection of the flesh, and a thousand years in Jerusalem built up, and beautified, and enlarged, as the Prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and the rest affirm." —JUSTIN MARTYR, *Dial. cum Tryph.* ed. 1686, p. 306.

Justin Martyr farther affirms: "And one of us, by name John, one of the Apostles of Christ, in the revelation made to him, predicted that those who believe in our Christ should live a thousand years in Jerusalem, and that after this should be the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection of all together with one accord, and the judgment; which also our Lord spoke of, that they shall neither marry nor be given in marriage, but shall be like the angels, being the children of the God of the resurrection."—*Dial. cum Trypho*, edit. 1686, p. 307.

Irenæus, who lived in the second century, and survived its close, was the pupil of Papias, bishop of Hierapolis (a disciple of St. John), and of the celebrated Polycarp. He thus writes:—"The above-named blessing belongs undeniably to the times of the kingdom, when the just shall rise from the dead and reign; when the creation, renovated and freed from the curse, shall bring forth abundantly of all kinds of food, from the dew of heaven and the fertility of the earth; as the Presbyters, who saw John, the disciple of the Lord, have related that they heard from him, in accordance with what the Lord taught concerning these times . . . . . Those things, also, Papias, a hearer of John, and who became a companion of Polycarp, a man of ancient times, witnesses in writing in the fourth of his books."

And again the same author writes:—"Then, as the Presbyters say, shall those who are worthy of dwelling in heaven depart thither, and others shall enjoy the delights of Paradise; and others shall possess the beauty of the city: for everywhere shall the Saviour be beheld according as those who see him shall be worthy."—*Iren. adv. Hær.* lib. v. c. 33.

The Fathers of the Nicene Council are reported by Gelasius to have expressed their views on this subject in these words:—

"Wherefore we expect new heavens and a new earth, according to the Holy Scriptures, when the appearance and kingdom of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ is manifested to us; and then, as Daniel says, the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and the earth shall be pure, a holy earth of the living and not of the dead; which David foreseeing, by the eye of faith, exclaims, 'I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, the land of the meek and humble.' 'For, blessed,' saith he, 'are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' And the prophet, 'the feet of the meek and humble,' saith he, 'shall tread upon it.'"—*Gelas. Cyzic. Acta Conc. Nic.* lib. ii. c. 31.

Statements to the same effect are found in the writings of Nepos, Lactantius, Apollinarius Junior, Sulpicius Severus, Ambrose, &c.

B.

On the future destiny of the earth, Professor Hitchcock, the eminent geologist, thus writes:—

"We have endeavoured to show, in a former Lecture, that the future residence of the righteous will be material; that it will, in fact, be the present earth, purified by the fires of the last day, and rising from the final ruin in renovated splendour.

"We have shown that this is the doctrine of Scripture, of philosophy, and of a majority of the Christian Church. A solid world, then, will exist, whose geology can be studied by glorified minds far more accurately and successfully than the globe which we inhabit; for those minds will doubtless be able to penetrate the entire mass of the globe, and learn its whole structure. The final conflagration may, indeed, for the most part, obliterate the traces of present and past organic beings. But, according to the doctrine of action and re-action in mechanics, in chemistry, in electricity, and in organization, every change that has ever

passed over the earth has left traces of its occurrence, which can never be blotted out: and it is not improbable that glorified minds will possess the power of discovering and reaching these records of the past, if not on the principle just specified, yet in some other way; so that the whole geological testimony of our planet will probably rise in full light before them. Points which we see only through a glass darkly, will then stand forth in full daylight; and from the glimpses we are able to obtain in this world of its present geological changes, that a mighty and interesting series will be seen by celestial minds!

"If, even by the coloured rays which come upon us through the twilight of this world, we are able to see so many striking illustrations of the Divine character engraven on the solid rocks, what a noble volume of revealed truth will be found written there, when the light of heaven shall penetrate the earth's deep foundations! Those foundations, figuratively described in Revelation as so many precious stones, bearing up a city of pure gold, clear as glass, will then reflect a richer light than the costliest literal gems which the rocks now yield. The geology of heaven will be resplendent with Divine glory."—*Religion of Geology*, p. 398.

Professor Tholuck, the distinguished German divine, says:—"The glorification of the visible creation is more definitely declared in Rev. xxi. 1, although it must be borne in mind that a prophetic vision is here described. Still more definitely do we find the belief of a transformation of the material world declared in 2 Pet. iii. 7–12. The idea that the perfected kingdom of Christ is to be transferred to heaven, is properly a modern notion. According to Paul, and the Revelation of John, the kingdom of God is placed on the earth, in so far as this itself has part in the universal transformation. This exposition has been adopted and defended by most of the oldest commentators; *e.g.* Chrysostom, Theodoret, Hieronymus, Augustine, Luther, Kepler, and others. Luther says, in his lively way, "God will make, not the earth only, but the heavens also, much more beautiful than they are at present. At present we see the world in its working clothes; but hereafter it will be arrayed in its Easter and Whitsuntide robes."

C.

The following observations on "Our present position in the Prophetic Calendar," by the learned Author of the *Horæ Apocalypticæ*, are worthy of deep consideration:—

"In the arrangement of the great calendar of prophecy, and the adjustment of our position on it, whether nearer to the final end or less near, it is evident that the chronological predictions (I mean those which involve chronological periods) must needs demand our most particular attention. First and foremost in importance is the memorable prophecy of the 1260 years of the Beast or Antichrist, six times repeated in the Apocalyptic vision, and three in Daniel. This measures the Beast's reign, in recognised supremacy over the Roman Empire, during its last divided and apostatised state; or rather, the reign of the Beast's last head, Antichrist. And we have seen that, with the light of that grand illustrative event of our latter day, *the French Revolution*, the *primary* commencement and end of the period may be deemed to have been fixed, on strong probable evidence, to about the years

A.D. 530 and 1790 respectively, at just 1260 years' interval: the one the epoch of Justinian's Decree and Code, which was a virtual Imperial recognition of the Pope's supremacy, in his then assumed character of Christ's Vicar, or Antichrist; the other, that of the French revolutionary outbreak, and legal code, which gave to the Pope's antichristian supremacy and power a deadly blow throughout Western Christendom. We also saw that in one of his prophecies Daniel appended, to what seemed to be the same period of 1260 years, yet a farther addition of 30 and 45; or, conjointly, of 75 years, as if still to intervene before the time of blessedness: so fixing the year 1865, or thereabouts, as the probable epoch of the consummation. And I think it may be here well worth the reader's while to stop and mark with me the consistency of this view of the commencing date of Daniel's 75 years of *the time of the end*, with other prophetic chronological periods, bearing on the time of consummation; — three, more especially: — 1st. on our progressing mundane chronology, reaching the thirtieth year beyond A.D. 1790, it meets the end of the long line of 2300 years in another of Daniel's visions, calculated from B.C. 480, as the epoch of the emblematic Persian ram's highest acme of conquering

power; the which was to mark, apparently, the destined commencement of the fall of the Turkman Empire:—a view of that prophecy realised by fact, let it be remembered, on the coming and passing of the year 1820. 2dly. On its advancing yet forty-five years farther; *i.e.* at the epoch of about A.D. 1865, it meets the *secondary* and *chief terminating* epoch of the 1260 years of Antichrist's power, calculated from that which may be deemed a secondary chief commencement of them in the Popedom-favouring Decree of Phocas. 3dly. At that self-same epoch of 1865, or thereabouts, it falls in with the probable termination of 6000 years from the Creation, according to the highest literary authority on such a matter: in other words, synchronises at that chronological point with the opening epoch of *the world's seventh millenary;* and, therefore, according to the primitive Church's expectation—not, perhaps, without apostolic sanction for it—with that of the commencement of the *Sabbatism of rest* promised to the saints of God."—Elliott's *Horæ Apocalypticæ*, 4th edit. vol. iv. p. 228.

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